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ABSTRACT

"The Program Evaluation Standards," established by 16 professional associations, identify evaluation principles that should result in improved program evaluations that address utility, propriety, feasibility, and accuracy. This digest summarizes these standards. Guidelines and illustrative cases to assist in meeting these standards are included with the full report. Seven standards related to utility are intended to ensure that the evaluation will serve the information needs of intended users. The three feasibility standards are intended to ensure that the evaluation will be realistic, prudent, diplomatic, and frugal. The eight propriety standards listed are intended to ensure that the evaluation will be conducted legally, ethically, and with due regard for the welfare of those involved in the evaluation, as well as those affected by the results. Twelve standards for accuracy are intended to ensure that the evaluation will reveal and convey technically adequate information about the features that determine worth or merit of the program being evaluated. Four resources are listed for further reading. (SLD)

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Department of Education
The Catholic University of America

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The Program Evaluation Standards

ERIC Clearinghouse on Assessment & Evaluation

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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA

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The Program Evaluation Standards

Sound evaluations of educational programs, projects, and materials in a variety of settings should have four basic attributes:

- Utility
- Propriety
- Feasibility
- Accuracy

The Program Evaluation Standards, established by sixteen professional associations, identify evaluation principles that when addressed should result in improved program evaluations containing the above four attributes. What follows is a summary of the *Standards*.

Guidelines and illustrative cases to assist evaluation participants in meeting each of these standards are provided in the full report (Joint Committee, 1994). The illustrative cases are based in a variety of educational settings that include schools, universities, medical and health care fields, the military, business and industry, the government, and law.

Utility

The utility standards are intended to ensure that an evaluation will serve the information needs of intended users.

U1 Stakeholder Identification. Persons involves in or affected by the evaluation should be identified, so that there needs can be addressed.

U2 Evaluator Credibility. The persons conducting the evaluation should be both trustworthy and competent to perform the evaluation, so that the evaluation findings achieve maximum credibility and acceptance.

U3 Infrmation Scope and Selection. Information collected should be broadly selected to address pertinent questions about the program and be responsive to the needs and interests of clients and other specified stakeholders.

U4 Values Identification. The perspectives, procedures, and rationale used to interpret the findings should be carefully described, so that the bases for value judgments are clear.

U5 Report Clarity. Evaluation reports should clearly describe the program being evaluated, including its context, and the purposes, procedures, and findings of the evaluation, so that essential information is provided and easily understood.

U6 Report Timelines and Dissemination. Significant interim findings and evaluation reports should be disseminated to intended users, so that they can be used in a timely fashion.

U7 Evaluation Impact. Evaluations should be planned, conducted, and reported in ways that encourage follow-through by stakeholders, so that the likelihood that the evaluation will be used is increased.

Feasibility

The feasibility standards are intended to ensure that an evaluation will be realistic, prudent, diplomatic, and frugal.

F1 Practical Procedures. The evaluation procedures should be practical, to keep disruption to a minimum while needed information is obtained.

F2 Political Viability. The evaluation should be planned and conducted with anticipation of the different positions of various interest groups, so that their cooperation may be obtained, and so that possible attempts by any of these groups to curtail evaluation operations or to bias or misapply the results can be averted or counteracted.

F3 Cost Effectiveness. The evaluation should be efficient and produce information of sufficient value, so that the resources expended can be justified.

Propriety

The propriety standards are intended to ensure that an evaluation will be conducted legally, ethically, and with due regard for the welfare of those involved in the evaluation, as well as those affected by its results.

P1 Service Orientation. Evaluations should be designed to assist organizations to address and effectively serve the needs of the full range of targeted participants.

P2 Formal Agreements. Obligations of the formal parties to an evaluation (what is to be done, how, by whom, when) should be agreed to in writing, so that these parties are obligated to adhere to all conditions of the agreement or formally to renegotiate it.

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P3 Rights of Human Subjects. Evaluations should be designed and conducted to respect and protect the rights and welfare of human subjects.

P4 Human Interactions. Evaluators should respect human dignity and worth in their interactions with other persons associated with an evaluation, so that participants are not threatened or harmed.

P5 Complete and Fair Assessment. The evaluation should be complete and fair in its examination and recording of strengths and weaknesses of the program being evaluated, so that strengths can be built upon and problem areas addressed.

P6 Disclosure of Findings. The formal parties to an evaluation should ensure that the full set of evaluation findings along with pertinent limitations are made accessible to the persons affected by the evaluation, and any others with expressed legal rights to receive the results.

P7 Conflict of Interest. Conflict of interest should be dealt with openly and honestly, so that it does not compromise the evaluation processes and results.

P8 Fiscal Responsibility. The evaluator's allocation and expenditure of resources should reflect sound accountability procedures and otherwise be prudent and ethically responsible, so that expenditures are accounted for and appropriate.

Accuracy

The accuracy standards are intended to ensure that an evaluation will reveal and convey technically adequate information about the features that determine worth of merit of the program being evaluated.

A1 Program Documentation. The program being evaluated should be described and documented clearly and accurately, so that the program is clearly identified.

A2 Context Analysis. The context in which the program exists should be examined in enough detail, so that its likely influences on the program can be identified.

A3 Described Purposes and Procedures. The purposes and procedures of the evaluation should be monitored and described in enough detail, so that they can be identified and assessed.

A4 Defensible Information Sources. The sources of information used in a program evaluation should be described in enough detail, so that the adequacy of the information can be assessed.

A5 Valid Information. The information gathering procedures should be chosen or developed and then implemented so that they will assure that the interpretation arrived at is valid for the intended use.

A6 Reliable Information. the information gathering procedures should be chosen or developed and then implemented so that they will assure that the information obtained is sufficiently reliable for the intended use.

A7 Systematic Information. The information collected, processed, and reported in an evaluation should be systematically reviewed and any errors found should be corrected.

A8 Analysis of Quantitative Information. Quantitative information in an evaluation should be appropriately and systematically analyzed so that evaluation questions are effectively answered.

A9 Analysis of Qualitative Information. Qualitative information in an evaluation should be appropriately and systematically analyzed so that evaluation questions are effectively answered.

A10 Justified Conclusions. The conclusions reached in an evaluation should be explicitly justified, so that stakeholders can assess them.

A11 Impartial Reporting. Reporting procedures should guard against distortion caused by personal feelings and biases of any party to the evaluation, so that evaluation reports fairly reflect the evaluation findings.

A12 Metaevaluation. The evaluation itself should be formatively and summatively evaluated against these and other pertinent standards, so that its conduct is appropriately guided and, on completion, stakeholders can closely examine its strengths and weaknesses.

JCSEE PR-1994

Approved by the American National Standards Institute as an American National Standard. Approval date: March 15, 1994.

Further Reading

Hansen, J.B. & Patton, M.Q.(1994). The Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation's "The Program Evaluation Standards: How to Assess Evaluations of Educational Programs" Book Review. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 54(2), 550-67.

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Stufflebeam, Daniel L.(1987) Professional Standards for Assuring the Quality of Educational Program and Personnel Evaluations. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 11(1), 125-43.

Thompson, B. (1993) The Revised Program Evaluation Standards and Their Correlation with the Evaluation Use Literature. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (New Orleans, LA, April 4-8, 1993) ED370999.

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